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HERNANDEZ BITTERSWEET AFTER CLINCHING FIRST CHURCHILL DOWNS RIDING TITLE

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, June 30, 2018) – Nine days ago the race was on between close friends **Brian Hernandez Jr.** and **Corey Lanerie** with only one win separating the duo for the leading jockey title at the 2018 Churchill Downs Spring Meet. But tragedy struck Friday, June 22 with the sudden loss of Lanerie's wife, **Shantel**, which allowed Hernandez to clinch his first leading rider title at Churchill Downs.

"It's a nice accomplishment, but it's a bittersweet accomplishment to have it happen this meet with what happened with Corey and Shantel," Hernandez said. "It would mean a whole lot more if Corey was here to battle it out."

The 32-year-old rider clinched the title midway through Friday's program at Churchill Downs and enters closing day with a 42-38-win lead over **Florent Geroux**, who is riding at Woodbine on Saturday.

Hernandez began the first week of the 38-day Spring Meet on top of the rider standings with six victories, most notably a 4 3/4-length score in the \$300,000 Pat Day Mile (Grade III) presented by LG&E and KU with **Funny Duck**.

"Funny Duck's win in the Pat Day Mile is probably what I'm proudest of this meet," Hernandez said. "The whole Derby Day was special winning three races. We've been fortunate enough to work hard at it and been on some exciting 2-year-olds that we can go on the rest of the year with."

Hernandez, who began riding at Churchill Downs in 2004, has recorded 546 wins beneath the Twin Spires and recently surpassed veteran **Jon Court** for 13th all time.

"You always reflect on the riders you've looked up to when you accomplish something like this," Hernandez continued. "Guys like **Calvin Borel** and Corey have always been in the same corner as me in the (jockey's) room. Watching those guys prosper and do well over the years really gives you motivation. It's an elite group to be a part of and it's truly an honor."

"The one thing that I've always learned from Calvin and Corey is to just keep showing up every day. If you show up every day, people will give you an opportunity. That's the model that I've done throughout my career and it lets people know you'll be there for them."

A native of Louisiana, Hernandez has been represented for the last six years by **Tom Amoss'** former assistant **Frank Bernis**.

"Our working relationship is one of the greatest," Hernandez said. "I never have to call him after the races and he doesn't have to call me. He texts me with my workers every day and goes out to do his job like I do mine. We'll talk when we need to bounce ideas off one another but I have the ultimate trust in him to find the best horses to win races. It's worked out great. We've been together six years now and haven't had an argument which I love. We're able to trust each other. We're always going to be there and keep doing our job."

Entering Saturday's 12-race closing day program, Lanerie had 35 wins and was third in the jockey standings. **Ricardo Santana Jr.** was fourth with 27 wins and **Shaun Bridgmohan** and **Julien Leparoux** were tied for fifth with 24 wins.

Hernandez will be honored with his leading rider trophy following Race 4 Saturday at approximately 2:13 p.m. Lanerie and his daughter **Brittlyn** are expected to be on hand for the ceremony to congratulate Hernandez.

ASMUSSEN, RAMSEY'S CLINCH RECORD-EXTENDING TRAINER, OWNER TITLES – Hall of Fame trainer **Steve Asmussen** clinched his record-extending 19th leading trainer title at Churchill Downs while **Ken and Sarah Ramsey** scored their 31st leading owner title, 23 more than **Calumet Farm** and **T. Alie Grissom**.

Asmussen, 52, entered closing day with 27 wins at the 38-day Spring Meet including a 1 3/4-length victory with **Mia Mischief** in the \$200,000 Eight Belles Stakes presented by Kentucky Trailer (Grade II) on Kentucky Oaks Day.

A native of Gettysburg, South Dakota, Asmussen's horses have amassed \$1,151,085 in purse earnings through 37 days of the Spring Meet. Asmussen was just 61 wins behind Churchill Downs' all-time leading trainer **Dale Romans**.

Louisville native **Brad Cox** held second in the trainer standings with 23 wins. **Ian Wilkes** was third with 18 victories while **Eddie Kenneally** was one win ahead of **Kenny McPeck** for fourth, 16-15 wins.

Ken and Sarah Ramsey won their first leading owner title in 2000 and have since dominated the standings at Churchill Downs winning the last 12 of 16 meets. The husband and wife duo won nine races at the Churchill Downs Spring Meet highlighted by a 4 1/2-length triumph in the \$400,000 Alysheba Stakes presented by Sentient Jet (GII) with **Backyard Heaven**.

The Ramseys have two horses entered on Saturday's closing-day program while Asmussen has 11 horses entered.

Asmussen will receive his leading trainer trophy following Race 5 at approximately 2:45 p.m. and Sarah Ramsey along with daughter **Jill Luttrell** and her husband John will accept the leading owner trophy following Race 6 at approximately 3:18 p.m.

LOCAL HORSEMEN MAKE SUMMER PLANS – Churchill Downs will go dark for 76 days until the sixth annual September Meet (Sept. 14-30) and several locally-based jockeys and trainers will remain in Kentucky for the summer.

"With the purse structure, Ellis Park is a great place to send horses this summer," trainer **Dale Romans** said. "It's a great place to start young horses, too."

Romans is among several horsemen who will target the Ellis Park meet, located on the border of Kentucky and Evansville, Ind. Among Romans' rivals at Ellis will be Spring Meet leading trainer **Steve Asmussen**. The Asmussen camp has a string of horses already based at Ellis Park with assistant trainer **Mitch Dennison**, several of which have started at Churchill Downs this spring.

Other horsemen keeping strings of horses in Kentucky until the September Meet include **Mark Casse, Brad Cox, D. Wayne Lukas, Mike Maker, Brendan Walsh** and **Ian Wilkes**.

Ellis Park's jockey colony will mirror Churchill Downs with the exception of **Florent Geroux, Julien Leparoux** and **Ricardo Santana Jr.** who will test their hand once again at Saratoga.

Many Churchill Downs horsemen also will ship a string of horses to Saratoga, including Asmussen, Casse, Cox, Lukas, Maker, **Mike Tomlinson** and Wilkes.

SINGLE-6 JACKPOT MANDATORY PAYOUT SATURDAY; JACKPOT STANDS AT \$64,231 – A highlight of the meet's final day is the **20-cent minimum Single-6 Jackpot** mandatory payout wager. Whatever new money is bet into the pool Saturday will be added to the carryover and must be paid out.

The daily six-race sequence has challenged bettors to select the winners of six consecutive races but the Jackpot pool only is paid if there is a single winning ticket. When multiple tickets contain six winners – which has been the case for each of the last nine race days – 90 percent of that day's pool is paid out and 10 percent is added to the Jackpot carryover. Takeout on the Single-6 Jackpot is just 15 percent, which is one of the lowest multi-race wager takeout rates in American racing.

Saturday's Single-6 Jackpot will be paid to ticket holders with the most winners in the six-race series, which covers Races 7-12 starting at approximately 3:50 p.m.

DOWN THE STRETCH – Impressive Aristides Stakes (GIII) winner **Chief Cicatriz** was scratched out of Saturday's \$75,000-added Kelly's Landing Overnight Stakes where he would have been the likely favorite. The colt has a minor foot bruise, according to trainer **Mike Johnson**, who is helping oversee the colt for trainer **Shawn Davis**. Another notable scratch on Saturday's program is **Tales of Chaucer** in the \$100,000 Bashford Manor (GIII). The 2-year-old colt, who was the 4-1 co-second choice on the morning line, is opting to run in the July 14 Rockville Center Stakes at Belmont Park for New York bred, according to trainer **Norm Casse**. ... The podcast of Friday night's "Inside Churchill Downs" radio show is available here: <https://soundcloud.com/espnlouisville/inside-churchilldowns-w-johnasher-derbymedia-horseracingkk-6-29-2018>. The one-hour program that airs every Friday on **ESPN 680/105.7** featured jockey **Brian Hernandez Jr.**, trainer **Bret Calhoun** and Churchill Downs Racing Club Manager **Gary Palmisano**.

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